



PRESS RELEASE

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MENTORS NEEDED TO HELP EX-OFFENDERS TRANSITION AFTER LEAVING PRISON

Mayor's Office of Ex-Offender Re-Entry Hold 'First Day Out' Mentor Training

INDIANAPOLIS – When ex-offenders re-enter Marion County, the chances of a successful reintegration are aided by mentors and case managers that help them transition back into the community. On January 4th, the Mayor's Office of Ex-Offender Re-Entry and the Church of Acts held the first in a series of training sessions for both men and women looking to become mentors through the "First Day Out Initiative."

The "First Day Out Initiative," focuses on mentoring offenders while they are still in prison and through the critical days after they return to Marion County, instead of waiting to make the connection until after the offender has been released.

"To be able to go to lunch, to be able to call, and to be able to address some issues with a mentor is important for ex-offenders," said Olgen Williams, Deputy Mayor for Neighborhoods. "Sometimes these folks just need someone to lean on when they feel they have no one else to turn to. This program provides that positive reinforcement that many didn't have growing up."

The program assigns each mentee both a mentor and a case manager. The job of the case manager is to coordinate services while the mentor serves as a support system, someone the mentee can contact if they need encouragement, or just someone that will listen.

Federal funding for the "First Day Out Initiative" was provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance with the support of U.S. Congressman Andre Carson's Office.

"The First Day Out Initiative is key piece to the puzzle when you discuss re-entry efforts here in Marion County," said Rhiannon Williams, the Director of Ex-Offender Re-Entry in the Mayor's Office. "We are looking for a diverse group of mentors so that we can make lasting connections with current and soon-to-be ex-offenders in Indianapolis/Marion County."

About the Mayor's Office of Ex-Offender Re-Entry

Each year in Indianapolis, approximately 5,000 ex-offenders re-enter Marion County. Many are faced with the difficult challenge of reintegrating into society after months and sometimes years in prison.

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In 2010, training workshops for local service providers are being planned along with the implementation of a new re-entry website that will link ex-offenders with service providers and all other local and statewide criminal justice partners.

Last year, the Mayor formed a 26 – person Re-Entry Task Force charged with developing partnerships with government, business, service providers, faith-based organizations and community members to come up with creative solutions to the issues and problems facing ex-offenders.

The Mayor's Office of Ex-Offender Re-Entry also held a Service Provider Forum last October which was designed to build leadership capacity within the Non-Profit Community, to define the City's role within Re-Entry in Marion County, and to help Non-Profits assess their capacity to deliver quality services to Ex-Offenders.

To learn more about Ex-Offender Re-Entry or to become a mentor, please contact:

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